What the War Has Done to London's Poor District

How the "East End" Takes the Gigantic Struggle on European Battlefields—Wives and Mothers Who Have Been Left Behind—How They Live, With Their Menfolks at the Front—One East End Woman Declares the War Has Helped Them—Her Strange Reasons Why This Is So—"Separation Allowances"—More Work Available—Suffering and Privations in the Slums—The Statement of a Labor Leader—One Hundred Thousand Bread Winners Called Away as Volunteers—They Have Left a Half Million Mouths to Be Fed—How This Is Being Done.

Special Correspondence of The Star.

LONDON, England, March 26, 1915.

SEVENTY-FIVE thousand able-bodied men have gone from the slums of London to march against the German hosts across the English channel. An army of volunteers more than three-fourths as large as the regular military establishment of the United States has left London's East End district and answered the call to arms in Great Britain's hour of need.

From a population of two and a half millions, the number of souls who, roughly speaking, people the slums of England's capital, nearly a hundred thousand bread-winners have been called away by the war. Behind them they have left half a million mouths to be fed.

How is it being done?

From the lips of one of the least fortunate of the wives of these slum-bred patriots comes the story of the war-time East End.

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The writer met the story teller one Thursday morning as she went about her marketing in Roman road, the swarming produce center of squalid Poplar Borough. The "Road" from end to end, as far as eye could reach, was jammed with peddlers' carts and thronged with swarming shops. The cries of the cockney merchants proclaiming their wares rose above the low-toned tenements. Business proceeded merrily. No sign of war was there.

The writer introduced himself to a shabby little woman who bumped into him as she hurried along the crowded sidewalk with her half-filled market basket swinging from her meager arm. "War has not hurt business," he suggested, indicating the bustling scene in the "Road" with a wave of the hand. "How does the East End pay for its food with thousands of its bread-winners gone to the war?"

"If you'll come along home wiv' me an' stop a bit I'll tell you some'at about it," she answered in her very best cockney.

Her home lay in a row of typical East London tenements that stretch in monotonous sameness along St. Stephen's road. It consisted of three shabby rooms on the ground floor. The kitchen was also the dining room and the parlor. It contained a table, two chairs, a stove, a sink and five children, the children ranging from a ten-year-old boy to a six-week-old baby. The jumble of furnishings and human beings occupied a matter of six by ten feet of floor space. The room with its contents was a prototype of a thousand other such homes in that district.

The mother cleared a passage to the table and proffered the better of the two chairs to her visitor. Then, while she spread thick slices of bread for the children and brewed them each a cup of the inevitable English tea, she told the story of the East End and how it lives in war time.

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Divesting her simple language of its quaint cockney tricks, this is what she said:

"It seems very queer, until you stop to think about it, but this war has helped a lot of us out here in the East End. I happen to be worse off than I was before the war because I've had bad luck. I took pneumonia when baby came six weeks ago and that keeps me from working at my trade. I could turn a very handsome penny nowadays, sir, making uniforms for the soldiers, but I'm not able on account of baby. Of course, there's a lot of others who've had luck one way or another the same as I, but on the average we in the East End are better off than we were a year ago.

"Take my own case. I'm the wife of a soldier and the government pays me a separate allowance of twelve shillings sixpence a week for myself, three shillings each for my two oldest children and two shillings each for the other children. Then my husband must give me three shillings, besides, out of his own pay. That makes twenty-seven shillings sixpence a week that I get. Many another woman with a family is getting nearly that much and is earning something, too. Oh, the separation allowance helps us a lot. I have seen the time, when my man was out of work, that I was far worse off than I am now with my allowance.

"It's a grand thing, too, to have your money coming in steady. Before the war my man and I could never be just certain about the job. Sometimes it held and sometimes it didn't. We couldn't be sure from month to month if we should be turned on the street for our rent the next month. It was very hard living that way. But now, while I haven't got much, I know where it comes from, and I can just figure what there is to spend for food and rent and fuel, and not wear myself out worrying about saving every extra penny against worse times to come."

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Optimism shone from the pinched face of the slum mother as she spoke.

"And then," she continued, "there's better times still to come, I expect. I shall be able to bring in some sewing to do, soon as I get a bit stronger. It is all I can manage now to keep the children fed and mind the baby, but it won't be long before I can get about and find some work. So I'm not so badly off, even if my man has gone to the fighting. Most of the women with families out here are in a better way, especially such as have one or two older children to mind the little ones while they go out and work.

"Then we all save a lot by having our men in the army. The men used to cost the East End families a heap. They had to have clothes and food and their daily papers to read, and their bad-smelling tobacco, and, worst of all, their beer at the public house every night. I tell you, sir, there wasn't much left for their families by the time they were made comfortable.

"One of my neighbors' little girls said to my little boy here the other day, 'We're not sorry papa has gone to the fight. We don't wish he'd be killed, but we hope he'll have to stay away a long time.' That shows how lots of the families out here feel toward their men-folks.

"Not that our men-folk, mostly, are not a good lot at heart and brave, too. We're proud of the way they've gone to fight for England and we'll welcome them back, but it's a hard life they've led from the day they were born and it's a harder life they've had since they took to earning potatoes and bread for their wives and their children, and it's taken the heart out of most of them so that they've little enough time to spend in making us love them. A many a man, I dare say, was gladder to leave his family than his family was to see him go. It's the dullness of our lives in the East End that kills the love. We're glad of the change the war has brought, most of us.

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"Supposing the change had made living out here harder for us we shouldn't have been so pleased with it, but you see, sir, in some ways it's made things a bit easier. The separation allowance has done a lot that way and then there's any number of other things have happened that put a bit more coppers in our pockets and some'at more of food in our mouths and clothes on our backs.

"Not only the soldiers' families are making their extra pennies nowadays. We all, that is all of us who have a trade we've learned, are getting our share of the work left behind by the boys who've gone to the war. There are thousands of women whose husbands are still at home earning their bit a week, that have found places in the factories and workshops where they are paid wages that only men could get in ordinary times. That way, you see, the incomes of their families are very near doubled and they are getting a tidy little sum, that grows every week, put by in some crack of the fireplace or stored up in the penny savings bank.

"If you'll take a turn round the corner into Old Ford road you will see where eleven tenement houses have been torn down to give room for a new factory that's being run up to make uniforms in. While it's building men and boys, that might have been out of work and hungry most of the time, are making good pay thereabouts, and after it's finished there'll be another thousand-odd places open for women like myself who know how to run a sewing machine.

"Every soon clothing factory in the East End has quit making ordinary citizens' coats and trousers and is busy with government contracts so big that they most likely can't ever fill them. Usually they turn off a lot of hands this time of year, but now they can't get enough real first-class workers.

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"Still, there's plenty of men, young and old, left in England, who have to wear clothes same as always. Somebody's got to be found to make the ordinary men-folks' suits. With all the factories sewing up uniforms there's plenty of work thrown into the hands of the little tailoring shops and they're sending out their work to the homes where women, who can't leave their babies or their old people, are only too glad of a chance to turn their hands to something that pays better than tidying up their houses. I shall be at that sort of work soon, I hope, and then I'll do my bit to help another family out by paying one of my neighbors to do my washing and help me with the housework.

"Our East End men who have not gone to war don't lack for work to do. Those that are good at a trade are all working about London at higher wages than ever they had before, and those that aren't trained to be carpenters, or masons, or such, just go and take a walk along the docks and find all the longshore jobs they need to keep them busy week in and week out. The railroads are short of labor, there aren't enough drivers for the trucks and lorries about the city, the omnibuses and tramcars have taken hundreds of our men and trained them to fill the places of drivers and conductors that enlisted for the fighting in France. Every factory that uses men wants able lads to help supply the government with hardware and leather goods and canned food and guns. There just are not enough of our men to fill the jobs that are open. We're sending out women and boys to do the work and earn the pay of the soldiers who have left us."

A shadow passed over the face of the speaker as she ceased dwelling upon the bright side of the changed life in the East End and turned to a darker phase of the wartime existence of herself and her neighbors.

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"Yes," she said, "it's a bit of luck that money comes so easily these days. If it weren't that soldiers' wives get their separation allowance and that everybody who has a mind to can find work at good wages, the war would starve us out in this section of the city. Prices are going up at such a rate that if they don't stop shortly we shall be worse off than the Germans. They haven't got beyond reason yet, but I should hate to see food a penny dearer.

"It's all very well for the majority of the East Enders to pay a war tax on everything the government likes to tax, because the majority can earn big wages and work long hours, but for those like myself, who have a fixed allowance, and who can't earn any more, it's very hard, indeed, sir. The war hasn't brought an increase in the pensions of hundreds of helpless old folks, and it hasn't put a penny extra in the pockets of sick people.

"I'm not the only mother with a large family of little ones who isn't able to improve her condition. There's lots of weak mothers who haven't the hope I've got of being able to take in work from outside. They're not enjoying this war. You might look into lots of homes out this way and find old-age pensioners that have scarce enough strength to go out of a market day and buy their bit of food, and sick folk that can't even raise a hand to feed themselves, and have to let their neighbors care for them. And whole families where the mother, with her bit of a widow's pension, can hardly keep her babies from starving and freezing before her own eyes.

"People like these barely managed to scrape along when prices were at their lowest. Now they don't manage at all. Some will buy coal to keep warm and then go hungry; others will shiver while they eat their little bite, according to their tastes. The charities are doing a lot to help such folk, but we in the East End know from trying it that charity doesn't help very far or very long.

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"My children don't starve and they don't freeze, but if prices climb higher I'm afraid they'll have to do one or the other, or maybe both. When I tell you how I manage to feed my babies and keep them warm you'll see how hard the war has been on the folk whose pensions aren't near the size of my separation allowance.

"I have to watch every least farthing I spend to stay inside my allowance. The only way I can keep the children nourished is to buy just solid food. There isn't any money to spend on cakes and tasty dishes. The only sweets we have are nourishing puddings, and I can't afford them excepting twice a week. I do make out to have tea twice a day. We shouldn't know how to get along without that.

"I have figured out what I will spend on food each week, and I never go outside my limit. Once a day we have sixpence worth of meat or fish. That sixpence worth has to do for five mouths. That makes three shillings sixpence a week for meat. I never buy fresh milk except for the baby. We have to be satisfied with condensed milk served in the tea. Milk, tea and a little sugar, with perhaps some cocoa, takes two shillings fourpence. Potatoes and bread are really what keep us nourished. Potatoes come to one shilling sixpence a week and bread costs seven shillings at threepence a loaf. The rent takes five shillings sixpence and fuel costs three shillings fourpence.

"In all then, you see, figure how I may, it takes twenty-three shillings and twopence from my allowance of twenty-seven shillings and sixpence to house, heat and feed my little family. Only four shillings and fourpence is left for me to buy any other odds and ends the family needs during the week. I make out to get along, but it's only a bare existence.

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"It's like I've told you, though. While there's hundreds in the East End that have as hard a time as I do to make what they've got buy what they need, and hundreds more even worse off than that who starve half the time and freeze the other half, there's thousands and thousands that live easier than they ever did before because the war has brought them work and the work has brought them money."

The little woman smiled brightly.

"That's how it is with us here in the East End since war has come," she said. "There isn't any more I can tell you about it, sir."

The writer said good-bye and sought confirmation of her story. He went to the home of the most influential leader of the labor party that the East End possesses.

"Is the population of this section of London better or worse off than before the war?" he asked the labor leader.

"Economically we are better off than ever before," was the reply. "Of course, there are hundreds of individual cases of destitution among pensioners and folk with fixed incomes who cannot work, but the only real economic problem we have to face is the rise in the price of food. If the government can be induced to keep the price down to a reasonable level we shall come through without any trouble."

The story of the slum mother and the statement of the labor leader tallied. Here, then, in the East of London, lives an immense community of two and a half millions which has furnished the British empire with seventy-five thousand of its best men, and yet has managed, partly with the aid of the government, but mostly through its own industry, not only to avoid misery, but actually to improve its situation.

In America, three thousand miles away from the battlefields of Europe, the war served to turn thousands upon thousands of slum-dwellers in great cities like New York and Chicago out into the freezing streets Christmas eve. In England, with only a strip of water fifty miles wide between the cliffs of Dover and the coast of France, war brought only fuller stockings Christmas morning to the children of the dwellers in the East End of London.

MARKET DAY SCENE IN THE EAST END DURING WAR TIMES.

THESE MEN HAVE INCREASED THEIR EARNINGS BY MAKING LEATHER BELTS AND SLINGS FOR BRITISH OFFICERS IN THE FIELD.

AN EAST END MOTHER AND HER SIX CHILDREN.

TYPES OF DOCK LABORERS WHOSE EARNINGS HAVE INCREASED SINCE THE WAR.

TYPES OF SOLDIERS' WIVES AND THEIR CHILDREN IN LONDON'S EAST SIDE.

Inventor of Melinite Makes Death a Pleasure

Special Correspondence of The Star.

PARIS, March 22.

THE world thrilled when in the early stages of the war it heard of turpinite—alleged gas, used by the French, which brought instant, rigid death to whole companies of German troops, yet without visible wounds.

Turpinite exists; but it is not that gas. It penetrates armor plate like cheese, and makes death on the field a pleasure. Thousands who looked comfortably dead have come back to life, complaining, "What is? Must we go on fighting?"

Turpin, its inventor, is as tender-hearted as was the great Alfred Nobel, who imagined that he had abolished war by making it terrific. But, unlike Nobel, he will not found Turpin prizes, because he has not the money.

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One day the great Alfred Nobel cut his finger and poured collodion on the wound—that sticky fluid, gunpowder dissolved in alcohol and ether, which dries to a film, like new skin. The pain kept him awake at night. The collodion gave him an idea. At 2 a.m. he went to his laboratory and succeeded in incorporating the guncotton in collodion with nitroglycerin. Such was the origin of dynamite gum, in which the two explosives complete each other, more powerful than the simple dynamite, which started the vast Nobel fortune. That sleepless night gave Nobel twelve more millions.

The great Eugene Turpin one day burned his finger, licked it, and went on working. The pain kept him awake at night, and thinking about picric acid, he got up and invented melinite—that smashing-in-all-directions explosive which the French army pours, melted, into shells; so cheap, quick and safe to handle that the cannons never lack them. That sleepless night gave Turpin zero dollars and the hump.

He never got a cent from the French government.

His scientific completeness was questioned, blandly, by official engineers who had invented nothing.

The English government took his melinite and called it lyddite. As if I should write this story, and a Dr. Lidd should sign it, and draw the pay by request.

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There is no use to argue about such things. Eugene Turpin's willful mouth and stormy blue eye in his round and ruddy face proclaim the quick-tempered original genius who cannot get on with red-tape functionaries; innocent-minded, impulsive and lacking in the arrivist's tranquil astuteness.

During years Turpin suffered from the malice of men and the prejudices of official savants. He invented Fenian fire, capable of throwing panic into an entire army corps by terror and surprise alone; and the French military authorities would not look at it. He invented non-poisonous paints — with which some one will make a fortune some day; but, be sure, it won't be Turpin. He invented the actual French artillery shell in use. (Patent No. 141,542, year 1881.)

Then the war broke out.

Tranquilly, they took Turpin's shell, poured Turpin's melinite into it, and got busy, never saying "Thank you."

Turpin did not care. He said, "France first."

And added, "Here is turpinite, if you want it."

They took his turpinite, without its name. Call it modern melinite, or modern lyddite. If Turpin should invent a perfume, they would call it Durand's bouquet or Smith's garden. But now you know why the new French artillery range is so much longer and why English dreadnaught guns penetrate armor plate like hot iron in butter.

Never did a charge of English cordite make holes like these. Late in life Alfred Nobel worked again on his gum dynamite. With a sufficient percentage of nitroglycerin in it, he obtained a non-detonating explosive—not smashing, but propulsive—which he called Nobel powder or ballistite. England adopted it as cordite, Italy as flite, and Germany under a German name, which escapes me. They imagined they had something far more powerful than French smokeless powder, but admittedly heating, rapidly wearing out the cannons.

Lucky for France Turpin was there. And Nobel's compound of dynamite and nitroglycerin to make a super-gun-powder will help us believe in fabulous turpinite, which, it would seem, has two regimes of decompasition, propulsive and smashing, without danger of passing accidentally from one to the other—as certain smokeless powders may, at times, by mere age.

These secrets are kept wrapped in darkest mystery; only their effects are positively known; but Europe is now sure that turpinite has nothing to do with the alleged gas, supposedly that of hydrocyanic acid, procured by putting the deadly poison, cyanide, in sulphuric acid. "This poisonous gas is heavier than the air," ran the early cablegrams, "and therefore would flow into depressions like trenches and kill all within them!"

Turpin calls it "dirtiness." He would never recommend such Borgia compounds for two reasons, the second being that they are impossible. The gas might, possibly, explode from shells; but instantly diluted in the pure air of heaven, they would be harmless.

Yet entire groups of the enemy have been found lying, sitting, and even standing dead, without the mark of a wound! More extraordinary yet, two-thirds of these dead men get up, after a time, and walk around, complaining as I told you: "Why did you wake me up? I was having such a good rest!"

From which it is believed that death by turpinite is a pleasure.

German army doctors understand these deaths and simili-deaths without wounds. At first, they were ascribed to simple melinite shells. Intense shelling with German high explosives had caused similar phenomena among the French, but rarely. It is the noise.

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The noise, exactly. Noise is atmospheric commotion; and even ordinary melinite, lyddite, etc., when the shells explode close enough, may so shock the nervous centers by terrific air vibrations as to cause an inhibition. So is a prizefighter knocked out in the ring. Regularly, he comes to; now and then, he doesn't. The same blow may or may not. It is a great mystery. Well, the noise of exploding turpinite procures a long-range super-knockout!

Thus the enigmatic compound has two uses. Turpinite is alleged to be so molecularly stable that it can be mixed with the propulsive powder of cannons—in small quantities. As such, its combustion increases to the very mouth of the piece—giving that extra bat to the projectile which sends it through armorplate like smearcase. Yet, as a detonating explosive, its time is 1-1,700th of a second, dissolving the shell to a cloud of bits like duckshot over a great area—and putting men "out" for good or a nap deliciously, by mere commotion!

Mixed with smokeless powder, it ought to blow up the cannon; yet it doesn't. Used in shells, it ought to need a special detonator; yet it doesn't. It may be found that there are two varieties of turpinite. Admittedly a first-class mystery, neither public nor military attaches are likely to learn much about it from the French official engineers. It is Turpin's.

And Turpin has other mysteries in his sack. The Fenian fire is a pure wonder.

"A little before the war," he says, "I crossed Belgium. Between Liege and Namur, on the plateau of Herve, precise points of the German concentration, there were immense wheat fields. With one of my inventions, panic might have been thrown into their armies."

It was not.

The official engineers had not examined Fenian fire.

Magnanimous Turpin!

STERLING HEILIG.

TURPIN, INVENTOR OF MELINITE, LYDDITE, FENIAN FIRE AND TURPINITE, IN HIS LABORATORY.

She Found the Brooch.

DETECTIVE work, following faint clues, dark hints and the like, is not the only method by which robberies may be solved. The wife of a prominent officer in the Marine Corps, who resides in Baltimore, and has a country place in Virginia, is authority for the statement, and offers the following little story in proof of her contention.

It seems that while she was at her Virginia place, she one day missed from her jewel box a valuable diamond brooch. She had the servants search high and low for the trinket, but it could not be found. All of her servants except one had been with her for years, and were absolutely trusted by her. The one exception, a mulatto girl, persistently urged upon her mistress the possibility of the brooch being at her Baltimore town house.

"'Tain't around heah, Mis' Alice" (not the real name of the mistress, of course). "I know dat it ain't around heah," persisted the girl.

Whatever suspicions the mistress may have had she kept to herself. After a while she returned to Baltimore, bringing her servants with her.

"Is you found it, Mis' Alice?" asked the mulatto girl, after a search of the house had been concluded.

Her mistress shook her head.

"No," said she, "I have not found it, Mary, but," lowering her voice and speaking impressively, "I have no cause to worry."

"Ain't you?" inquired the girl.

"No," continued her mistress. "You see, I went to a fortune teller today. She told me that whoever had the diamond would die shortly, and that the brooch would be found among their effects. I only have to wait for their death to know who took my brooch."

"Mah gracious!" breathed the mulatto girl. "Did dat voodoo woman say dat?"

"She did," replied her mistress, solemnly.

The mulatto girl precipitantly departed, and, strangely enough, her mistress found the missing brooch that very night pinned to one of her gowns.

War.

A MILITARY attache said at a Washington luncheon:

"Modern warfare has no picturesqueness, no beauty. A wounded soldier at Charleroi was asked to describe his impressions of a modern battle. He eased his face bandages and replied:

"'A modern battle? What's it like? Well, first you hear a deuce of a noise, and then the nurse says, 'Try and take a little swaller o' this.'"